

**James Madison to Nicholas P. Trist, January 26,
1828. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,
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TO N. P. TRIST MAD. MSS.

Montpr, Jany. 26, 1828.

Dear Sir Your favors of the 18th. have been duly recd. I am sorry you thought an apology necessary for the delay in sending me the residue of my letters to Mr. Jefferson; and rather surprized that you should be scrupulous of reading any of them. I took for granted that you would regard them, as on his files equally open tho' less entitled to inspection than his to me. In forwarding the parcels you are so obliging as to gather for me, it may be best to wait for a private & direct conveyance, if such an one be near in propect. Otherwise there is so little risk in so short a distance by the mail, that I have no objection to that conveyance.

Before I recd. your letter I had not adverted to the criticism in the Advocate on Mr. Rush; nor even read the criticism on the criticism, being diverted from it by the signature, which, I ascribed to the author who has published so much under it, and whose views of every branch of the subject I thought myself sufficiently acquainted with.

I had indeed read but skimmingly the Treasury Report itself. I was certainly not struck with the passage in question as a heresy, and suspect that it must have been misunderstood by those who denounce it as such.¹

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1 Richard Rush, as Secretary of the Treasury, in his report for 1827 advanced the usual protectionist argument in favor of the benefit to agriculturalists of a better market from the increased number of artisans. *Cong. Debates*, 20th. Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2824.

How far or in what mode it may be proper to countervail by encouragements to Manufactures, the invitations given to Agriculture, by superadding to other lands in the Market the vast field of cheap & fertile lands opened by Congs., is assuredly a fair subject for discussion. But that such a field is attractive to Agriculture as much as an augmentation of profits is to Manufactures, I conceive to be almost *luce clarius*. It is true that as the enlarged sale of fertile lands may be increasing the food & other articles in Market cheapen them to the manufacturer, and so far operate for a time at least as an encouragement to him; but the advantage bears in this case no proportion to the effect of a redundancy of cheap & fertile lands in drawing of capital as well as that class of population from which manufactories are to be recruited.

The actual fall in the price of land particularly in Virginia may be attributed to several causes 1. to the uncertainty & low prices of the crops. 2. to the quantity of land thrown into market by debtors, and the defect of purchasers, both owing to the general condition of the people, not difficult but unnecessary to be explained. But the 3 and main cause is the low price at which fertile lands in the Western market are attainable; tempting the owners here to sell out & convert the proceeds, or as much of them as they can spare, into cheaper & better lands there.

Nothing would be further from my wishes than to withhold at proper prices, a fair supply, of the Natl. domain

to Emigrants, whether of choice or of necessity: But how can it be doubted that in proportion as the supply should be reduced in quantity or raised in price, emigration would be checked and the price of land here augmented.

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Put the case that the dividing mountains were to become, an impassable barrier to further emigrations, is it not obvious that the price of land on this side, except so far as other temporary causes might be a check, would spring up the moment the fact was known. Or take another case: that the population on the other side, instead of being there had remained & been added to the number on this, can it be believed that the price of land on this would be as low as it is. Suppose finally a general reflux of the Western population into the old States, a like effect on the price of land can be still less doubted.

That the redundancy & cheapness of land is unfavorable to manufactures, in a degree even beyond the comparative profitableness of the labour bestowed, is shewn by experience, and is easily explained. The pride of ownership when this exists or is expected, the air of great freedom, the less of constancy & identity of application, are known to seduce to rural life the drudges in workshops. What wd. be the condition of Birmingham or Manchester were 40 or 50 millions of fertile acres placed at an easy distance and offered at the price of our Western lands? What a transfer of capital, & difficulty of retaining or procuring operatives wd. ensue! And altho' the addition to the products of the earth, by cheapening the necessaries of life, might seem to favor manufactures, the advantage would be vastly overbalanced by the increased price of labour produced by the new demand for it, and by the superior attractiveness of the agricultural demand.

Why do such numbers flee annually from the more populous to less populous parts of the U. S. where land is cheaper? Evidently Because less labour, is more competent to supply the necessaries & comforts of life. Can an instance be produced of emigrants from the soil of the West, to the manufactories of Massts or Pena.

Among the effects of the transmigration from the Atlantic region to the ultra-montane, it is not to be overlooked that besides reducing the price of land in the former by diminishing the proportion of inhabitants; it reduces it still further by reducing the value of its products

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in glutted markets. This is the result at which the reasoning of the—1 fairly arrived, and justifies the appeal made to the interest of the Southern farmers & planters on the question

1 The MS. draft has the word “erased” here followed by “Hamilton” which is struck out.
of having the same people for consumers of their vendibles, or rival producers of them.

But whilst I do justice to the successful reasoning in the case, I take the liberty of remarking, that in comparing land with machinery or materials an important distinction shd. be kept in view. Land unlike the latter, is a co-operating *self-agent*, with a surface not extendible by art, as machines & in many cases materials also, may be multiplied by it. Arkwright's machine, which co-operates a thousand times as much with human agency as the Earth does, being multipliable indefinitely, soon sinks in the price to the mere cost of construction. Were the surface or the fertility of the earth Equally susceptible of increase, artificial & indefinite the cases would be parallel. The earth is rather a source; than an instrument or material for the supplies of manufactug, except when used in potting & brick work.

Having thus undertaken to criticise a criticism on a point of some amount I will indulge the mood as to a very minute one. You use the word “doubtless *ly*. ” As you may live long, and may write much, it might be worth while to save the reiterated trouble of two supernumerary letters if they were merely such. But if there be no higher authority than the Lexicography of Johnson, the *ly* is apocryphal: And if not so, the cacophony alone of the elongated word ought to banish it; *doubtless* being, without doubt, an adverb, as well as an adjective, and more used in the former than the latter character.